

Ebenezer Watts House  
47 South Fitzhugh Street  
Rochester  
Monroe County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5660

HABS  
NY  
28-ROCH  
33-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5660

EBENEZER WATTS HOUSE

NY,  
28-ROCH, 33-

Location: 47 South Fitzhugh Street, Rochester, Monroe County, New York

Present Owner: Blackacre, Inc.

Present Occupant: Moser, Johnson and Reif (Blackacre, Inc.)

Present Use: Law offices

Statement of Significance: Built between 1825 and 1827, this early Greek Revival house is the oldest residence in the city still on its original site. It is located in the Third Ward Historic District.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1825-27.
2. Architect: Unknown. It is believed that Capt. Daniel Loomis, who arrived in Rochester in 1820, may have designed and built the house. He is known to have built the houses of Col. Nathaniel Rochester, the city's founder, and those of three of Rochester's sons.
3. Original and subsequent owners: "... lot eighty of the portion of the village being on the west side of Fitzhugh Street, except an eight and one quarter foot by ten rod of the south part, deeded this day to Jacob Gould ..." (who purchased lot seventy nine).

1825 Deed, April 20, 1825, Book 5, p. 302.  
From: Jacob Howe and Lucretia, his wife.  
To: Ebenezer Watts.  
For: \$800.00.

1832 Deed, August 9, 1832, Book 24, p. 113.  
From: Ebenezer Watts.  
To: James H. Watts.  
For: \$3,000.00.

1832 Deed, August 9, 1832, Book 25, p. 135.  
From: James H. Watts.  
To: Nancy D. Watts, wife of Ebenezer Watts.  
For: \$3,000.00.

- 1845 Deed, March 17, 1845, Book 71, p. 241.  
From: Hiram Sibley, Sheriff for Charles H. Watts,  
brother of Ebenezer.  
To: James H. Watts.  
For: \$577.95.
- 1849 Deed, July 16, 1849, Book 87, p. 49.  
From: Isaac Hills, assignee of James H. Watts.  
To: Deborah C. Watts, wife of Ebenezer Watts.  
For: \$3,000.00.
- 1874 Deed, February 2, 1874, Book 272, p. 117.  
From: Deborah C. Watts.  
To: Lorenzo Kelly.  
For: \$7,000.00.
- 1911 Deed, November 24, 1911, Book 867, p. 203.  
From: James H. Kelley, executor.  
To: Robert B. Wicks.
- 1911 Deed, December 20, 1911, Book 870, p. 160.  
From: Robert B. Wicks.  
To: The Abstract Guarantee Company.  
The purchase was subject to a mortgage of \$9,500.00.  
by R. B. Wicks to James H. Kelley.
- 1948 Deed, October 15, 1948, Book 2507, p. 138.  
From: Abstract Title and Mortgage Corporation.  
To: Blackacre, Inc.  
In 1929 the Abstract Guarantee Company merged with  
Title Guarantee Corporation of Rochester and Buffalo  
Abstract and Title Company.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown.
5. Original plans: None known.
6. Alterations and additions: Some interior alteration has  
been made as to room divisions, A large, sixty feet by  
forty feet, one and a half story wing to the rear was con-  
structed on the site of the original summer kitchen,  
c. 1917. Some interior renovation was done in 1948. The  
structure was restored in 1956 by Conway Todd. The rear  
addition roof was raised, the cupola added, three false  
chimneys installed, and the rear entrance enlarged by an  
enclosed entry.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Ebenezer Watts began the first copper, tin and sheet iron business in the village of Rochesterville, c. 1817. This business later became a large and prosperous hardware store. Watts was Master of the Masonic Lodge when lodges were forced underground. He had the Masonic records sealed in the walls of the house. They were found during restoration.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deeds, Office of Monroe County Clerk.

Interview, late 1967 with Mr. J. Boyd Mullen, senior partner in the law firm, conducted by Daniel and Nancy Robbins.

Wills, Surrogate's Court, Hall of Justice.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Department of Urban Renewal and Economic Development,  
City of Rochester. Third Ward Urban Renewal Plan.  
n. d.

McIntosh, Prof. W. H. History of Monroe County, New York. Philadelphia: Everts, Ensign and Everts, 1876.

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle. March, 1964.

Rochester Historical Society, Publication Fund Series,  
Vols. VII, VIII, XI.

Rochester Times-Union. September 22, 1956.

Schmidt, Carl and Ann. Architecture and architects of Rochester, New York. Rochester: Rochester Society of Architects, 1959.

2. Likely sources not yet investigated: None known.

Prepared by Kevin Patrick Harrington  
Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in  
Western New York  
November 30, 1966

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This Greek Revival house is a fine example of the early development of this style with its simplified volumes and surfaces.
2. Condition of fabric: The renovated structure has been well maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Thirty feet by forty feet and an addition of forty feet by sixty feet; three bay front; two-and-one-half stories; rectangular layout.
2. Foundations: The rough stone foundations are topped by a cut stone water table.
3. Wall construction: The brick walls laid in Flemish bond are painted yellow. A narrow wood molding delineates the attic frieze from the lower portions of the wall.
4. Structural system, framing: The masonry walls are load bearing.
5. Chimneys: There are two interior brick end chimneys on each side. Only one is original. Three false chimneys were added during the restoration in 1956.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The six panel wood front entrance door has an elliptical fanlight and rectangular sidelights of leaded glass.
  - b. Windows: All windows in the original section are double hung, with six over six light sashes. The first floor windows on the south facade are floor length. In the brick frieze of the original section and the addition are low windows, admitting light to the attic through ornamental grilles. The long, rectangular, double hung windows of the addition have nine over six light sashes. All major windows have stone lintels and sills.
7. Roof: The shallow hipped roof with deep overhanging

and boxed eaves is topped by a rectangular cupola, an addition during the 1956 restoration. East and west sides have double hung windows with six over six light sashes. They are framed by paired pilasters. North and south sides have three stationary windows separated and framed with pilasters. A deep cornice with molded trim is topped by a flat roof. The addition has a simple gabled roof.

8. Porches: An enclosed entry porch was added to the east entrance in 1956. Large stationary small-paned windows on the sides and narrow sidelights framing a two panel wood door are set above wood panels. Plain wood pilasters frame these elements and support a deep cornice. A flat roof has boxed eaves.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The side entrance opens into a hall which contains the stairway to the right and three rooms to the left. The second floor center hall opens to three rooms each to the left and right. This is not the original room design.
2. Stairways: An open string curved stair has plain modern wood balusters, two per step. Every other step has iron replacements painted to match. Original newel post has been replaced with a square support. Step ends have applied sawn scroll brackets which are continued around the open stairwell. There is a round burlled maple handrail. The fourteen inch deep steps have a molded nosing.
3. Flooring: All floors have modern covering over a wood base.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls and ceilings are painted plaster.
5. Doorways and doors: The east entrance door has a finely molded arched frame with keystone and pilasters set on bases which correspond to the baseboards. There are six panel wood doors throughout. The first floor doors are framed with a molded trim with square corner blocks. The interiors of door jambs are six-paneled. All other framing elements appear to be contemporary.
6. Special decorative features: One first floor fireplace remains, in the northwest room. It is composed of a

rectangular opening with marble surround and hearth. The second floor, southeast room has a replacement fireplace to duplicate the original. The black veined marble surround is framed with a wood mantel, colonnettes, frieze, paneled end blocks and central tablet. The fireplace in the second floor, southwest room is closed, but the wood mantel remains.

7. Hardware: Contemporary.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating: There is a modern forced air furnace.

b. Lighting: All fixtures are modern. Gas jets remain in the basement.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces east on a narrow lot, bounded by an alley and parking lot to the north, the Civic Center complex and parking ramp to the south, and a parking lot to the west. Small strips of grass remain between the house and sidewalk and between the Civic Center and the south side.

Prepared by Daniel and Nancy Robbins  
Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in  
Western New York  
December 9, 1967

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This recording project of twenty-six selections of historical and architecturally significant Rochester structures was undertaken in 1966, by the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York, Inc., Mrs. Patrick Harrington, Executive Director, in cooperation with the Historic American Buildings Survey, James C. Massey, Chief. The project was under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Senior Historian. Architectural and historical descriptions were contributed by the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York, Inc. General photographic documentation was undertaken by Hans Padelt, Senior Engineer, Graflex, on a contractual basis with the Historic American Buildings Survey. The final documentation and editing was done by Susan R. Slade in 1978, for transmittal to the Library of Congress and the impending publication of the Historic American Buildings Survey New York State catalogue.